

## Craniosacral Therapy: A Basic View Encouraging the Body to Heal Itself

Craniosacral Therapy is a gentle, hands-on treatment technique that encourages the body to heal itself. It is simple and can be taught to anyone who has a basic understanding of anatomy and an intention to promote healing and be of service. Self-healing and surviving life's bumps and bruises is really important caregiving we can pass on to one another.

CST enhances the function of the central nervous system like a farmer helps the garden grow, by irrigating fields with life giving water. In a similar way, therapists gently encourage the production and distribution of the life giving waters of the brain known as cerebrospinal fluid. As water helps nutrients reach the plant, the circulation of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) gives nutrients to the brain and spinal cord. When the central nervous system (CNS) functions well, muscles relax, circulation improves, pain and swelling decrease. When the body functions properly, food metabolism improves, the defensive immune system is better able to prevent infections and fight disease. When the body works better, hormones and blood chemistry are in balance and children with disabilities are better able to make positive growth changes. People with chronic pains can relax, rest, and let go of tensions both physical and emotional. They then can exercise and become healthy. Seniors can be more focused, energetic, and able to enjoy life. This is why we say, "CST does not heal or cure anything," but *it simply encourages the body to self-regulate and heal itself.*

In order for this system to work, there is a gentle rhythmic movement in which the head gently widens and narrows, and the spine gently and slightly lengthens and shortens. This provides a gentle pumping action to circulate the clear fluid (CSF) from the blood around the brain and spine and then back into the venous return blood flow and back to the heart. This is why the skull is not a solid coconut, but a beautiful round structure made of some two dozen bones, all interconnecting like a jigsaw puzzle. A completed jigsaw puzzle has slight motion when one lifts it from the table. Bones of the skull have slight motion too, and move to the movement of the fluids passing through, like the lungs move with breath and the arteries move with the heartbeat. Early pioneers in cranial work (A. T. Still and W. G. Sutherland) called the movement of the head and spine "The Breath of Life."

This rhythm—like the rhythm of the heart and lungs—can be felt (with a little practice) from all parts of the body. In CST, we gently monitor the rhythm, encourage the flow, and sometimes even stop it momentarily, causing the self-regulating mechanisms of the body to encourage the flow even more, creating an opportunity for self-correcting changes of the connective tissue within the brain, the spinal cord, and throughout the body. As a result, tension patterns within these tissues change, muscles soften, joints have smoother, less restricted movement and the craniosacral system works more efficiently. The patient feels more relaxed, less tense, and more able to move, function, and heal.

A treatment session is usually about 45 to 60 minutes. The patient remains fully clothed and simply lies in a comfortable position on a padded treatment table. The amount of manual touch of the therapist is very light, often as light as the weight of a coin.

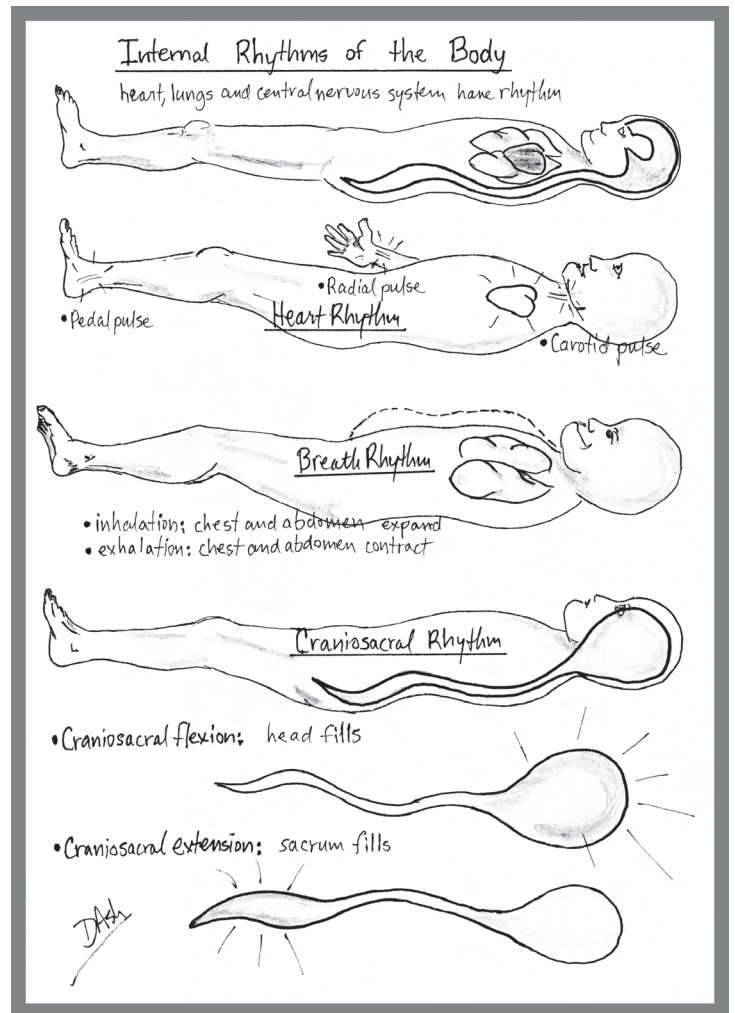


Illustration by Don Ash from "Body of Water, Ocean of Mind" [www.CSTAlliance.com](http://www.CSTAlliance.com)

Patients are usually able to tell immediately, or in a session or two, if this is a treatment that will help them. Mothers often see changes in their children right away, with improvements in sleep, attention span, social interaction, and functional abilities such as balance, eye-hand coordination and gait.

Oftentimes, the therapist will use CST in combination with other therapies, like massage, exercise, or before and after surgery or other medical procedures. It is so simple, gentle and effective, it is now being used in hospitals, clinics, schools and nursing homes. This therapy is used with babies and children with autism, cerebral palsy, developmental delay, and trauma victims from accidents and sports. It is also used with chronic pain patients of all types and ages. CST is so natural and safe it may be the right caring touch each of us sometimes needs to get well and have happy days.